Municipal Affairs

A Guide for Preparing a Council Meeting Agenda

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Alberta

Alberta Municipal Affairs (2013) *A Guide for Preparing a Council Meeting Agenda*

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Although the *Municipal Government Act (MGA)* does not outline the contents of the agenda for council meetings, there are several suggested best practices to consider which would allow the meeting to run smoothly and to meet the requirements for council meetings that are outlined in sections 192 - 200, 227 - 229 and 606.

General Information

Parliamentary procedure is a body of rules, ethics, and customs governing meetings and other operations of legislative bodies, in this case the municipal council. An agenda is a list of individual items which must be "acted upon" or processed that are presented in the order in which they are to be dealt with, beginning with the call to order and ending with adjournment. The agenda and information package should be prepared for each meeting of council to ensure that council business is dealt with in an orderly and expedient manner.

Many municipalities have a procedural bylaw to provide a standard format for council meetings and make it easier for members of council, staff, the media, and the public to understand the decision-making process. A procedural bylaw should name and describe the responsibilities of council committees, provide for the order of business and method of distributing the agenda for council meetings, set rules regarding the proceedings at regular meetings of council, and describe how items may be put on the council agenda.

Optimally, the agenda is distributed to council members, attendees and the recording secretary prior to the meeting, so that they will be aware of the subjects to be discussed, and are able to prepare for the meeting accordingly. As the public should have access to the agenda package at the same time as council, many municipalities also post the agendas for upcoming meeting on their municipal website.

When an agenda item requires a decision of council, the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) is charged with ensuring that all information required has been identified and any recommendations provided (if required) be attached to the agenda. This could be in the form of a report or a request for decision (RFD). A request for decision includes a background sentence or paragraph, a statement of the problem or issue, any findings or conclusions, any recommendations for action, policy implications, or financial impact, and should list who has prepared or reviewed the information. A sample RFD is attached to this guide.

RFDs for issues that will be discussed in public should be available with the agenda package. RFDs for issues that meet the tests of harm in the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPP)* should only contain information that does not cause harm (nature of issue, recommendation).

Council has the option to change the format of the agenda if they feel it isn't working for them. The agenda format is normally outlined in municipality's procedural bylaw. Some best practices to keep in mind when planning and developing a procedural bylaw or the agenda are:

- As a courtesy to the public, hold presentations/delegations at the beginning of the meeting.
- Arrange topics in sections – for example: all bylaws readings under Bylaws; the CAO report, financial reporting, and councillor reports could be included under Reports.
- Confidential items are those items that fall within the parameters of closing the meeting to the public as set out in section 197 of the *MGA* and are normally left until the end of the meeting as a courtesy to the public.

Agenda Structure

The following sections are based on the sample agenda attached to this guide, and outline the types of information that should be contained under each section.

Title and Heading

The agenda title and heading should be similar to the council meeting minutes in format and should:

a. State that it is an agenda
b. Name the Municipality
c. Show the date, time and place of the meeting for which the agenda is issued.

Acceptance of the Agenda

The agenda for a council meeting is not binding unless it has been adopted by a resolution or motion at the start of the meeting. It may be adopted as presented or with amendments. It is recommended that items should only be added to the agenda at the meeting if the matter is of an urgent nature.

Adoption of Previous Minutes

Section 208(1)(c) of the *MGA* requires that the minutes of each meeting be adopted by a motion of council at a subsequent meeting of council.

Public Hearings

Section 230 of the *MGA* outlines the public hearing requirements and specifies that a public hearing must be held during a regular or special council meeting. A council may establish procedures for the conduct of the hearing. These procedures could be outlined in the municipality's procedural bylaw.

Delegations

The agenda may provide a specific section for receiving presentations or questions from individuals or delegations. As a courtesy, delegations should be scheduled earlier in the agenda so that members of the public who want to address the council are not kept

waiting. Parameters for these presentations could be included in the municipality's procedural bylaw and conveyed to the delegates when they make the request to present.

Bylaws

It is best that full copies of any bylaws presented for council consideration be attached to the agenda package, so that each council member may examine the full document before being required to vote on it.

Business

This section should identify items of business that require a council decision, and should reference any attached RFD or other supporting information.

Councillor / Committee Reports

Councillors generally report to council on meetings they have attended. These reports are most appropriately supplied in writing and included in the agenda package. The municipality's process for receiving these reports should be included in the procedural bylaw.

CAO Report and Action List

Section 207 outlines the responsibilities of the CAO. One of these is to advise and inform the council on the operation and affairs of the municipality. Many CAOs use an action list to track and report to council on the status of actions taken on resolutions from previous meetings. The list would normally include any unfinished business which has been raised at a previous meeting which has not been completed. The items would remain on the action list until they are finalized. An action list template is attached to this guide.

Financial

It is the responsibility of the administration to provide council with financial information such as budget to actual comparison reports.

Correspondence

Any correspondence that is addressed to council or that should be brought to the attention of council should be listed on the agenda.

Confidential Items

An in-camera meeting is a private meeting of council which excludes the public. Section 197(2) of the *MGA* specifies that a council may close all or part of their meeting to the public if a matter to be discussed is within one of the exceptions to disclosure in Division 2 of Part 1 of *FOIPP*. The exceptions include matters where disclosures could be harmful to personal privacy, individual or public safety, law enforcement, intergovernmental relations, or economic or other interests; reveal confidential

evaluations, local public body confidences, or advice from officials; or disclose information that is subject to legal privilege. No bylaw or resolution can be passed at an in-camera meeting except a resolution to revert to the council meeting in public or to recess.

It is considered a best practice to circulate and collect any background information on the confidential item during the in-camera session. All members are required to keep in confidence matters discussed in-camera until the item is discussed at a meeting held in public.

Adjournment

A meeting is adjourned when the agenda is finished.

Sample Agenda

MUNICIPALITY OF ANYWHERE

AGENDA

REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

Tuesday, December 17, 2013

The regular meeting of the council of the Municipality of Anywhere will be held in the Municipal Office on Tuesday, December 17, 2013, starting at 7:00 pm.

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. ACCEPTANCE OF AGENDA

3. ADOPTION OF THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

4. PUBLIC HEARINGS
   a. Proposed bylaw to rezone.....
   b.
   c.

5. DELEGATIONS
   a. John Day to discuss recycling options. 7:40 p.m.
   b.
   c.

6. BYLAWS
   a. Bylaw 04-13, Establish the procedure and conduct of meetings of council and council committees
   b.

7. NEW BUSINESS

   a.

   b.

   c.

8. COUNCILLOR REPORTS

9. CAO REPORT and ACTION LIST

10. FINANCIAL

    a. Budget to Actual reporting to date

11. CORRESPONDENCE

    a. Correspondence – accept for information

12. CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

    a. Personnel Item

    b. Pending legal issue

13. ADJOURNMENT

Sample Request For Decision

MUNICIPALITY OF ANYWHERE

Request For Decision (RFD)

Meeting:	**Regular Council**
Meeting Date:	**December 17, 2013**
Originated By:	**_____, Chief Administrative Officer**
Title:	**Bylaw 04-13, PROCEDURE BYLAW**
Agenda Item Number:	**6(b)**

BACKGROUND/PROPOSAL:

Council requires a process to govern procedures at meetings to ensure that council meetings and council committee meetings are effective. The bylaw regulates the conduct of council, councillors and others attending council and council committee meetings.

At the December 3, 2013 council meeting, council passed the following resolution:

> MOVED by Councillor Bucks that the Chief Administrative Officer prepare a proposed Procedure Bylaw for the December 17, 2013 regular meeting of council.

DISCUSSION/OPTIONS/BENEFITS/DISADVANTAGES:

The Municipal Government Act provides the following:

> s.145 A council may pass bylaws in relation to the following:
>
> a) the establishment and functions of council committees and other bodies;
>
> b) the procedure and conduct of council, council committees and other bodies established by the council, the conduct of councillors and the conduct of members of council committees and other bodies established by the council.

Proposed Bylaw No.04-13 is presented for first reading.

COSTS/SOURCE OF FUNDING (if applicable)

Not applicable in any direct way.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

1. Council review the proposal and give first reading to the proposed bylaw.
2. Council provide further direction or required changes/amendments.

Initials show support – Reviewed By: **CAO:** _____

Action List Template

ACTION LIST MUNICIPALITY OF:_____				
MONTH	RESOLUTION	ASSIGNED TO	STATUS	DATE COMPLETED